



Interview Guidelines: What to Do and What Not To Do

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1. Resume

Make sure you bring a copy of your resume on clean, white or ivory colored paper that is specifically marked "resume paper". Avoid printing your resume on any other colored paper as it makes it difficult for the interviewer to read it and it appears unprofessional.

2. References

Make sure you have a list of phone numbers and contact names from previous employers who are willing to give reference information about you. It is highly unprofessional and inappropriate to give incorrect numbers or incomplete information. This sends out the message that you are either unorganized, unprepared or that you have something to hide. A simple list of 3 or 4 former managers or supervisors with company names and phone numbers is best. Even if the persons are no longer employed by the same company as when you worked with them, you can still provide a number to where they can be reached.

3. Dress and Appearance

Women- should wear a pressed navy blue, black, or grey suit. Hair should be neatly combed or pulled back in a bun or hair clip. Makeup should be light and heavy perfume should be avoided.

Men-should wear a pressed navy blue, black or grey suit. Hair should be neatly combed and heavy cologne should be avoided.

4. Interview Etiquette

When meeting the interviewer for the first time, make sure to make immediate eye contact with him or her. When they offer, firmly shake the interviewer's hand and smile to show him or her that you are confident, friendly and happy to be there. When invited to sit down, make sure you wait for the interviewer to sit first. Make sure you sit in an upright position with your back straight. Fold your hands on your lap or at your sides. Don't slouch or rest back in the chair like you own the place.

While there is no secret or best answer to these questions, there are a few comments or responses to avoid. Here are some guidelines on how to avoid answers that will "turn off" the interviewer:

A. Don't Be Negative!

Avoid any type of negative comments about your previous or current employer. For example, don't say, "I can't stand my boss, he is overbearing and never lets me do things my way". This may paint a very negative picture for the interviewer and make you look like a complainer who does not like to follow the rules. You can always say something like "While I have enjoyed my employment with my current employer, I am seeking an opportunity that will give me the chance to be promoted".

B. Don't Give Too Much Information!

Prepare answers in advance that are "to the point". No interviewer wants to hear your life story. Think of catchy, positive 2 or 3 sentence answers to the majority of questions. Most interviewers have a list of questions they must have answered during the interview. Be respectful of the interviewer's time and know that they will be far more interested in a person who knows what they want and who can organize their own thoughts before they come in to the meeting.

C. Investigate and Research the Company You are Meeting With in Advance

There is not excuse for not visiting or researching the company you are invited to visit for an interview! Go to the site in-person or research the company on the internet but do not go in "cold". If you know just a few things about the company, the interviewer immediately can identify that you really are interested in the company and that you took the time to investigate what they are all about.

D. Prepare Thoughtful, Relevant Questions

If you have investigated the company in advance, it will be easy to come up with a list of questions specific to that company. You can always bring a list of

generic questions about subjects like benefits, training or the interview process. Before leaving, don't forget to ask the question: "What will the next step will be in the interview process?" This is important because it shows the interviewer that he or she does not have an unlimited amount of time to get back to you. It also shows him or her that you are confident and that you want to be informed.

Keep your focus on the interviewer by making eye contact on a regular basis. Avoid looking up and to the floor when answering questions. There are many interviewers who believe that people look up when they are lying or not telling the complete truth! Smile and laugh when appropriate. Most importantly, be yourself! If you have prepared in advance and feel good about what you have to offer, you will naturally be able to express yourself without being a nervous wreck. If you do get nervous, keep your hands at your sides as to avoid having them in the way. Before leaving, wait for the interviewer to offer a handshake, thank him or her again and keep eye contact while smiling one last time.

5. Preparing Answers Before the Interview

There are a few questions you can be sure the interviewer is going to ask you. If you are not prepared to answer them, you may lose your opportunity only after being in the interview a few minutes! Here are a few sample questions:

1. Why are you looking for a new job?
2. Why did you leave each of your previous positions?
3. What was it that you liked the most about each of your jobs and what did you dislike?
4. What was your biggest contribution to each employer?
5. What can you contribute to this company?
6. Why did you change jobs so often?
7. Why did you stay in the same position for so long without receiving a promotion?
8. How much money do you need/want to make?
9. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? How about in 10?
10. What is your biggest opportunity for improvement?
11. What would your previous or current employer say if I were to ask him or her how you handle crisis or problems?
12. Who was the last person you had to terminate and how did you handle it?
13. What was the most challenging problem you faced at your last job and how did you handle it?
14. What do you like the most about this business?
15. How did you get into this business?
16. What do you like about our company?
17. Have you visited any of our locations? If so, what did you think?
18. Could you see yourself fitting in with our culture?
19. What is your management style?
20. How many days did you miss from work last year? Why?

6. Sell Yourself but Don't Be Arrogant

There is a fine line between being positive about your accomplishments and arrogant. Mention a few key accomplishments that are factual. Admit that you have some areas for improvement but that you are already working on them and that you have a “game plan” on how to tackle them.

7. Follow Up

Send a card or email thanking the interviewer for his or her time. Be brief and positive and make sure you remind him or her of how much you are looking forward to hearing back about the next step.

Good Luck!